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ABSTRACT

Ireland's career guidance system and policies were evaluated. The review team that met with policymakers and guidance practitioners in the public and private sectors, analyzed data from a national questionnaire, and reviewed pertinent documentation. The evaluation focused on the following areas: a better balance of services within schools; more integrated and coordinated approaches to career information and to the skills, qualifications, and careers of practitioners; a more targeted approach to targets and resourcing; and improved steering, governance, and coordination. Ireland's career guidance system was found to have numerous strengths in the area of moving closer to a lifelong approach in the provision of career information, guidance, and counseling services. Its legislative base is solid, the climate favors initiative and experimentation, the profession is committed, and the services provided are generally well received. The review team concluded that Ireland's career guidance system needs the following things: an improved information base is needed to help steer the development of services; improved coordination among key stakeholders; and a more diverse approach to delivery that makes more extensive use of community resources, information and computer technology, experience, and curriculum delivery. The following items are appended: a list of review team members; the review visit schedule; and a summary of suggestions and recommendations. (Contains 36 footnotes.) (MN)

OECD REVIEW OF CAREER GUIDANCE POLICIES

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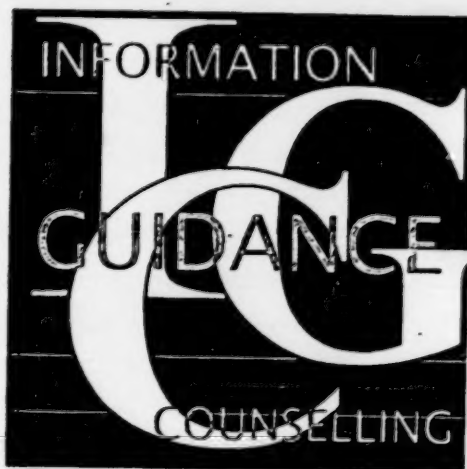
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IRELAND COUNTRY NOTE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. In the autumn of 2000 the OECD's Education Committee and its Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee endorsed a comparative review of national policies for career information, guidance and counselling services. Participating countries complete a detailed national questionnaire, and then host a short one week visit by an expert team. Ireland was the first country to complete a draft of its national questionnaire, and hosted a review team visit on December 3-7, 2001¹. During the visit the review team visited guidance services in schools, in tertiary education, in employment offices, in training centres, and in community settings. In addition to visiting guidance programmes the team was able to meet key policy makers in both the education and employment portfolios, to talk to those responsible for developing career information materials, to meet representatives of professional associations of guidance practitioners and to talk to those responsible for training guidance practitioners. During the visit a national seminar was held that brought together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss key issues with the review team. Drawing upon the visit, the draft national questionnaire and other documentation, this Country Note summarises the impressions of the team as well as its suggestions for some of the ways in which career information, guidance and counselling service policies might be developed in Ireland². After a descriptive introduction, five areas are highlighted for consideration:

- A better balance of services within schools;
- A more integrated and co-ordinated approach to career information;
- A more integrated approach to the skills, qualifications and careers of practitioners;
- A more targeted approach to targets and resourcing; and
- Improved steering, governance and co-ordination.

1. Appendix 1 gives details of the review team.

2. These suggestions are summarised in Appendix 3.

2. THE CONTEXT

2.1 The Irish economy, labour market and education system

2. The Irish economy boomed during the 1990s, with GDP per capita growing by an annual average of 7.1% between 1990 and 2000, compared to an OECD average of 2.6%. Rising labour force participation and employment were accompanied by a shift of employment away from agriculture and towards services, with tourism and the ICT sector showing particularly strong growth. Falling unemployment levels led to skill shortages in some sectors of the economy, and to falling expenditure on active labour market programmes. Economic growth and a healthy labour market have particularly benefited the young and the well educated. Educational expenditure and participation in both secondary and tertiary education have risen. Upper secondary completion rates are now high in Ireland, as are tertiary qualification levels. The upper secondary general education pathway in Ireland is a large one by OECD standards, with relatively little specific vocational preparation taking place at that level. This results in a strong emphasis upon preparation for tertiary entry within the school system, and this is reinforced by competitive external examinations at the end of both stages of secondary schooling. Unlike most OECD countries upper and lower secondary schooling generally take place in the same institution in Ireland³, and average secondary school sizes are low. In addition to an expansion in participation in tertiary education, the 1990s saw a burgeoning in the number of upper secondary school leavers entering Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) institutions⁴. These institutions have many features in common with North American community colleges or Australian TAFE colleges, offering courses at a wide range of levels and to a wide range of students, both youth and adults. Progression paths have been developed between some such courses and tertiary education.

3. At 56% compared to an OECD average of 61%, female labour force participation in Ireland remains relatively low by OECD standards, although it has risen in recent years. Low levels of education in previous generations have resulted in a significant problem of low adult literacy levels, with an associated problem of pockets of long term adult unemployment⁵. Participation in adult and continuing education also remains low by OECD standards. Recent adult education initiatives have been designed to address these issues.

2.2 Career information and guidance services in Ireland: A brief overview

4. Career information, guidance and counselling services in Ireland are diverse, with long-standing services sitting alongside interesting recent initiatives and experimentation. The public sector plays the dominant role, but in practice service delivery is shared between many different government agencies, with the private sector, and organisations that represent guidance practitioners also playing a role. There is a

3. Secondary schooling in Ireland takes place in a three-year junior cycle followed by a two-year senior cycle. However a significant proportion of students (roughly 40 %) also take an optional Transition Year between the end of the junior cycle and the beginning of the senior cycle.

4. Some 40% of upper secondary graduates are now reported to enter these institutions, roughly as many as enter tertiary institutions.

5. In the International Adult Literacy Survey 55% of Irish adults scored in the bottom two literacy levels, and the unemployment rate of this group was, at 23%, more than twice that of those scoring at average levels or above. In 1999 60% of all unemployment in Ireland was of 12 months duration or more, compared to an OECD average of 32%.

strong core of committed guidance professionals in Ireland, and they are supported by an extensive institutional framework for service delivery, by a national infrastructure for training, and by the National Centre for Guidance in Education, an agency of the Department of Education and Science within the education portfolio⁶. (In addition there is a National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance that helps to promote a European guidance dimension within the FÁS, the Irish Training and Employment Agency⁷). Clients seem to appreciate the quality of the services that are provided, as do school Principals⁸. Guidance has a clear legislative basis in both the education and labour portfolios and its importance has been reflected in a number of recent national policy initiatives: for example those dealing with adult education and services for the disadvantaged. While services are diverse, they are generally not specialised. Few, and certainly neither of the major services, focus exclusively upon *career* information, guidance and counselling.

2.2.1 Schools

5. The Education Act (1998) requires schools to ensure that "students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices". To help meet this obligation, the Department of Education and Science gives schools an allocation that is equivalent to one Guidance Counsellor for every 500 students. These are normally qualified teachers⁹ who have obtained a post-graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. In the past they have normally undertaken this training on a full-time basis, generally on release from their schools on full salary but paying their own tuition fees and in some cases also meeting substitute teaching costs¹⁰. However upon obtaining the qualification required for the job they receive no recognition in the form of a salary increase.

6. These staff are not all employed full-time in careers work. First, at the discretion of the Principal their time is divided between teaching normal school subjects and guidance¹¹. Second, the time that they

6. The National Centre for Guidance in Education develops guidance materials, provides advice on good practice, supports innovation and pilot projects, disseminates information to practitioners, organises in-service training, carries out a range of surveys and related research on guidance practice and needs, and advises the Department of Education and Science on policy development. It also acts as a European National Resource Centre for Guidance under the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme.

7. FÁS is responsible to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

8. For example a 1997 survey of school students' views on the usefulness of sources of career information rated Guidance Counsellors higher than any other sources, including work experience or family (National Centre for Guidance in Education (1997) *Careers Information Materials in Irish Schools - Consumers View*, Dublin). A 1997 survey of Principals' attitudes to guidance services reported positive views, even if many Principals confessed to knowing little in detail of the work of Guidance Counsellors (McKenna, P., McNamara, G. and Barrett, T. (1997) *Principals' Perceptions of the Guidance Service in Post Primary Schools*, National Centre for Guidance in Education, Dublin).

9. Under present practices the requirement for Guidance Counsellors to hold a teaching qualification allows some of their time to be diverted from guidance to teaching by individual Principals. However the combination of a teaching qualification and the skills and experience developed by the work of a Guidance Counsellor -- a whole school perspective, curriculum involvement, parent and community liaison are examples -- does, on reports received during the visit, appear to be a good basis for career advancement within the school system.

10. A part-time course has recently commenced, and this is proving to be an attractive option for those who wish to obtain a guidance qualification. It has been one factor in the closure of one of the full-time courses.

11. In smaller schools only half of the Guidance Counsellor's time is allocated to guidance, and half is expected to be used for teaching normal subjects. A 1999-2000 National Centre for Guidance in Education audit of guidance in second-level schools showed that in perhaps as many as a third of schools a third or

devote to guidance is spent both on students' personal and social problems and on careers work, as well as on tasks such as teaching study skills and helping students fill out application forms for tertiary education. The need to provide personal and social guidance as part of their job means that careers work can take second place when confronted with student crises on a day to day basis. However monitoring systems are weak, and hard evidence on how Guidance Counsellors actually divide their time between their different roles is not easy to come by.

7. Career education is not a mandatory part of the curriculum of Irish secondary schools. Neither are normal subject teachers required to help students to see the link between their studies and post-school careers as a standard part of their duties. At their discretion Guidance Counsellors can deliver careers lessons as part of the school's guidance programme, and to the extent that they do, this normally occurs in upper secondary school rather than in lower secondary school.

8. However career education is not completely absent from the curriculum. Those upper secondary school students who enrol in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are required to take, in addition to traditional Leaving Certificate subjects, three attractive and well designed modules that help to prepare them for work and post-school careers. These give students workplace experience, develop job seeking skills, help to expand their knowledge of the workplace, and expose them to applied and contextualised learning styles in and out of the school. A significant work experience element is also included in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, which also has a strong guidance focus. At the discretion of the school, guidance and work experience can also be included in the curriculum of the Transition Year, and in practice they appear to be in a large proportion of cases¹².

9. There are approximately 630 full-time equivalent positions for Guidance Counsellors in Irish secondary schools. The Department of Education and Science's Guidance Inspectorate is responsible for the professional supervision and inspection of Guidance Counsellors in secondary schools, although responsibility for decisions on resources rests elsewhere in the Department.

2.2.2 The public employment service

10. The 1987 Labour Services Act requires the Irish Training and Employment Agency (FÁS) "...to provide, or arrange for the provision of, whether for reward or otherwise, services consisting of the provision of guidance, advice and information in respect of choice of career and employment and to assist (whether financially or otherwise) in, and co-ordinate, the provision of such services by others".

11. The Irish public employment service has some distinctive features that affect the ways in which career information, guidance and counselling services are provided:

- Benefit administration takes place in a separate agency, leaving the employment service free to concentrate upon job placement and the management of labour market programmes (including associated occupational guidance);
- The employment service consists of two arms: FÁS and the Local Employment Service (LES). The LES was established in 1995 as a separate service to tackle pockets of persistent

more of Guidance Counsellors' time was being used for subject teaching, although this was less likely to be the case in larger schools.

12. The aim of the Transition Year is generally seen as aiding students' personal and educational maturity, in part by giving them a year in which they are freed from the pressures of preparing for competitive external examinations.

unemployment through smaller, more approachable local offices whose staff work to mobilise the long term unemployed and those not in the labour force back to work or study. Whilst in theory integrated, the two services in practice appear to operate separately; and

- FÁS is responsible for both employment services and training services, including the management of apprenticeship and the administration of vocational training centres.

12. One outcome of these arrangements is that the day-to-day work of front-line FÁS staff can combine a guidance function and a job placement function. As a result most Employment Service Officers (and close to eight in ten of all LES staff) are at times involved in the provision of information, guidance and counselling services. The combined number of FÁS Employment Service and LES staff with at least some form of guidance training is close to eight in ten of those who become involved in providing information, guidance and counselling. FÁS and LES staff are able to undertake the University of Ireland, Maynooth Certificate in Adult Guidance and Counselling on a part-time basis over a twelve month period. Their tuition fees and release time for course attendance are paid for by FÁS, and on gaining the qualification those who complete the Maynooth course normally receive an increment on their salary scale. FÁS has set itself the goal of increasing the number of its staff (including LES staff) who are qualified at Diploma/Higher Diploma level in guidance and counselling. Another outcome of the way that the public employment service is organised is that guidance and placement services are able to be integrated with training services and located within FÁS training centres. Within a lifelong learning context this has the potential to give staff a stronger focus upon education and training.

13. The tight labour market of the 1990s has resulted in FÁS staff reducing the amount of time spent on managing labour market programmes, and has increased the pressures for the agency to strengthen its employer servicing functions and its role in training and in addressing skill shortages.

14. Within FÁS and the LES as a whole approximately 580 staff are involved in providing information, guidance and counselling services. While in practice much of this is limited to information provision, those clients who are case-loaded and given priority under the national Employment Action Plan receive a more in-depth guidance and counselling service. The LES is notable for employing staff (called Mediators) who provide basic guidance and information.

2.2.3 Post Leaving Certificate

15. Guidance services in the burgeoning Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) sector are staffed by the Department of Education and Science (DES) using the same qualification requirements and student-to-Guidance Counsellor ratios that are used to staff secondary schools, with the same discretion being given to the Principal as to the use of their time. Guidance staff appear to serve both enrolled students and prospective students. Unlike their colleagues in schools they are often required to play a marketing role, visiting upper secondary schools to provide information to prospective students. Like their colleagues in schools, Guidance Counsellors in the PLCs do not provide a focused careers service, but must meet needs for both career and personal advice and counselling.

2.2.4 Tertiary and post secondary education

16. All Irish universities and many Institutes of Technology provide a careers advisory service. Unlike guidance services in Irish schools and PLC institutions, careers services in tertiary education are normally specialist careers services, and are quite separate from the student health or psychological services that provide personal counselling and advice. The qualifications and training of those who staff

these services are determined by the institutions themselves, without central regulation. The Irish Higher Education Authority has issued guidelines on such services, but these appear to be quite broad and to play a limited role in defining their nature in practice. A little under 37 careers advisers, and some 15 support staff and information officers, work in the careers services of these institutions.

2.2.5 Other

17. The great majority of all information, guidance and counselling staff in Ireland are employed in secondary schools and in the public employment service¹³. A number of interesting smaller services also exist.

- Following the publication of the White Paper on Adult Education¹⁴ 11 pilot adult education guidance programmes were established in 2000. An additional eight projects were established in 2001, and a further group of eight will be launched in 2002. The pilots are intended to provide support to adults who are enrolled in the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, in literacy programmes and in community education programmes¹⁵. These pilots are interesting and innovative in a number of ways. Networking, community links and partnerships are integral to their operations; clear targets for their client group have been established and monitoring methods have been put in place to assess how well targets are being achieved; an evaluation process that allows learning from best practice has been established; and their staffing structure makes use of para-professionals as well as of qualified Guidance Counsellors¹⁶. A post graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling is normally sought for guidance staff recruited to the pilots, as in secondary schools, but difficulty in obtaining sufficient qualified staff for the new pilots was reported.
- The Youthreach programme was established in 1989 and provides a safety net for early school leavers and unemployed youth. Individual programmes are located in a wide variety of settings: centres sponsored by local Vocational Education Committees; Community Training workshops that are funded by FÁS; and Senior Traveller Training Centres. The personal, social, educational and vocational problems experienced by many participants result in advice, guidance and counselling commonly forming part of the job of those who teach in the programme, and pilot training programmes have been established to meet this need. In addition a guidance service is provided to each programme by qualified personnel on a limited part-time basis¹⁷.
- Career guidance, normally as part of pre-release programmes, is provided within Irish prisons. Services provided by professional guidance counsellors are complemented by less structured guidance provided by probation officers, chaplains, teachers in the prison education service and the like.

13. These two services probably account for over 90% of all staff. This is likely to be somewhat of an overestimate, as the numbers employed in the private sector are not known, and the full-time equivalent staff in some of the smaller services such as Youthreach are not easy to estimate accurately.

14. Government of Ireland (2000), *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, Dublin.

15. In practice it seems that prospective students and those enrolled in other programmes are also being served by the pilots.

16. The projects are staffed by project co-ordinators, guidance counsellors and information officers.

17. FÁS employs and provides training for a very small number of advocates who work on an outreach basis to support progression through and from Youthreach into employment

- Career guidance is also provided by FAS within its small Asylum Seekers Unit¹⁸.
- Little is known about the extent of career guidance provided by the private sector in Ireland, although the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (one of the main professional bodies for guidance workers) reports having members employed in recruitment firms, management consultants and the like. That the sector is not large is hinted at by the limited number of entries in the Irish Golden Pages telephone directory for those providing such services. However the private sector does play a role in producing and disseminating career information. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.

3. POLICY ISSUES

18. Ireland has a number of well developed and well supported information, guidance and counselling services. Strengthening the focus of these services upon *career* information, guidance and counselling will be important in helping to lay a more solid basis for lifelong learning in Ireland. In the short term the creation of separate career-focused services, to sit alongside and complement other types of guidance services, is not a practical option, both for resource reasons and because of the strong institutional infrastructure already invested in the provision of existing services. The emphasis in the medium term needs to be upon strengthening and supporting existing services to improve the ways in which they provide career-oriented assistance. We suggest five areas in which such a goal might be addressed.

3.1 A better balance of services within schools

3.1.1 A better balance between services in upper and lower secondary schooling

19. The 1999-2000 Audit of Guidance in Post Primary schools (NCGE, 2000) shows a major imbalance between guidance services provided in lower (junior cycle) and upper (senior cycle) secondary education. In over 60% of schools 20% or less of total guidance time is spent with students in the junior years of secondary schooling, and in roughly a quarter no time at all is spent with these students. This imbalance is very hard to justify¹⁹. If it were the case that resource limitations and student-Guidance Counsellor ratios require decisions to be made about priorities for access to services, school grade does not seem the most rational way to ration services. A more equitable way to ration services would be based upon student needs.

18. And in addition asylum seekers may receive career guidance in FÁS Employment Service Offices.

19. The effective absence of guidance services in primary schools is also notable.

20. Certainly the potential number of guidance and counselling hours available per student constitutes a strong argument for developing better ways to screen students and ration services based upon student need²⁰. This would require more systematic tools for assessing student need to be developed.

21. Putting in place a stronger developmental approach to career assistance, to give students skills in career decision making, improve their knowledge of the world of work, and better prepare them for upper secondary subject choice is one answer to this problem. One of the strongest arguments in its favour is that, if well done, it will reduce the pressures upon Guidance Counsellors to provide career assistance in a one-to-one mode and give them increased time, when they are providing such assistance, to focus upon students who have the greatest needs. Where career assistance is included within the curriculum – for example in the Leaving Certificate Vocational and Applied Programmes referred to in Section 2.2.1 – we gained the impression that teachers responsible for delivering career-related modules and Guidance Counsellors can work well together in individual schools. However only limited opportunities are available for students to take part in such programmes. Expanding them will require policy decisions to be taken centrally. As curriculum-delivered and Guidance Counsellor-delivered career assistance are at the moment managed by separate areas of the Department of Education and Science these central policy decisions require a co-ordinated overall approach to be taken to career development policy. At the moment no policies are in place to ensure either that all students receive some careers education, or to prevent duplication in the use of limited resources to provide access to career education. Students in the Transition Year may receive career education for example, and then receive it again if they enter the Leaving Certificate Applied or Vocational programmes.

22. Mandating work experience, work orientation, career education or similar subjects within the lower secondary curriculum²¹ could be one policy option for addressing this issue. One of the arguments against such an option is the problem of crowding in the junior cycle curriculum. In Ireland's case such an argument will have greater force because of the importance of external examinations within the system, which increases the reluctance of students, parents and teachers to increase the time devoted to non-examinable subjects. However this argument does not apply within the Transition Year that around 40% of the cohort already take part in. It is an ideal place to begin to build such an approach: making career education and work exploration a mandatory part of the curriculum; integrating curriculum- and guidance-based approaches to career assistance at the policy level; and building a stronger basis for an integration of a teaching- and a guidance-based approach at the level of the school. A model is available in the link modules included in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and these are supported by excellent curriculum materials²². An important element of such an approach would be assistance with choice of senior cycle subjects in the light of students' occupational aspirations.

23. Another curriculum-based option would be to extend the opportunities for students to include career-related modules in their senior secondary programmes, as they are in the LCVF and the Leaving Certificate Applied. One of the many attractive features of the LCVF is that it allows students at the one time to prepare for tertiary entry examinations and to prepare themselves for their future careers, but to do so in a way that does not narrow their options by concentrating upon specific occupational preparation. At

20. 22 hours of Guidance Counsellor time per week for each 500-799 students means that each student can receive at most between 6.8 and 10.4 minutes of personal attention per month.

21. Elements of such approaches can be seen in some junior cycle subjects, but their emphasis is more upon personal development than upon career development.

22. Another interesting model was encountered at Trinity College Dublin. There, personal development and employability skills courses developed and initially also delivered by the Careers Service are now integrated into the curriculum in ten per cent of the university's departments, with the teaching being provided by faculty rather than the Careers Service. This provides an excellent model for the development of a similar approach during the Transition Year.

the moment students' flexibility in selecting subjects within the LCVP, and hence the wider attractiveness of the programme, appear to be constrained by the LCVP's origin in the European Social Fund²³. Ways of incorporating this approach into all Leaving Certificate programmes need to be explored, either by making subject choice in the LCVP more flexible, or by other means.

3.1.2 *A better balance between career-oriented services and personal and social guidance and counselling*

24. The 1998 Education Act requires schools to provide students with "appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices". Schools are now encouraged to develop guidance plans as a way of implementing this requirement, but as yet no definition exists of what appropriate guidance should be. We believe that there needs to be a clear statement by government, backed by resource decisions, that appropriate guidance includes access by all students to assistance with their career decision making and development. This would be an important step towards introducing an entitlement for all students to balance the obligation imposed upon schools in the 1998 Education Act. The implementation of such an entitlement would require the use of a wide variety of approaches in addition to on-to-one Guidance Counsellor interventions: curriculum-based approaches; experience-based approaches; the use of ICT; and the wider use of community resources are among these approaches. This would have implications for the overall approach to the allocation of resources for careers assistance purposes.

25. Clearly there are resource implications involved in making such a statement, the resolution of which will not be immediate. We address these at several points, including Section 3.1.1 above and Section 3.4.3 below. At the moment a number of factors mitigate against careers work being a high priority within schools' overall approach to guidance. These factors include:

- The absence of a formal guidance programme planning requirement for schools²⁴;
- Constraints on Guidance Counsellors' time arising from:
 - ⇒ A role that combines subject teaching with guidance;
 - ⇒ A role that combines personal and social guidance with careers guidance; and
 - ⇒ Existing student-to-Guidance Counsellor ratios.
- A weak integration of career guidance into either the curriculum or the day-to-day work of subject teachers; and
- Limited use of experience-based approaches, of ICT and of community-based resources to extend available Guidance Counsellor resources.

26. In obtaining a better balance between assisting students with their personal and social problems on the one hand and their career and work-related needs on the other, much attention has been given to only one of these factors: existing student-to-Guidance Counsellor ratios. The 2001 Guidance

23. For example by the requirement that students include a foreign language in their programme.

24. Guidelines for the practice of guidance and counselling in schools were issued by the National Centre for Guidance in Education in 1996 and were revised in 2001. The 1999-2000 guidance audit showed that only 10% of secondary schools had a written whole school development plan that included guidance provision, and only a further 18% had a written school guidance plan.

Enhancement Initiative has taken some steps to address these. However if career guidance is to achieve a better balance within the overall profile of schools' guidance activities, approaches that take all of the above factors into account need to be developed.

3.2 A more integrated and co-ordinated approach to career information

3.2.1 Existing products

27. The 1987 Labour Services Act gives FÁS a formal responsibility for developing career and employment information. In fulfilling this role it has developed *Career Directions* as its principal product. *Career Directions* provides information on some 800 occupations or careers. In the past it has been produced and distributed, both to FÁS offices and other agencies principally in CD-ROM format²⁵. However the version that was to become available in January 2002 is also to be available on the Internet²⁶, with a link to FÁS job vacancy data. *Career Directions* contains a front-end individual vocational interest assessment instrument that allows occupational interests and preferences to be evaluated and which is used to narrow the occupations or careers to be searched. While it produces a list of suggested occupations for the user it does not produce a report on the interest areas themselves. In this sense it is not a transparent instrument, giving no feedback to users that can be used to improve self awareness. It also appears to be somewhat ad hoc in its method of development, and not based upon accepted theories of occupational choice or rigorous psychometric principles. *Career Directions* contains a range of information on education and training requirements for the occupations that it includes, but this information is not as detailed as that contained in QUALIFAX, the second major Irish electronic career information product.

28. QUALIFAX is a directory of courses in tertiary education and in Post Leaving Certificate institutions. It contains information on student grants and on tertiary application procedures in addition to course information. Its development was an initiative of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, although support for developmental work is now provided by the Department of Education and Science. It is widely distributed in CD-ROM format and can also be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.qualifax.ie/>. The version available at the time of the visit did not include courses in FÁS training centres (including apprenticeship courses), on courses available at the upper secondary level, or on adult education courses, but it is intended that the first of these will be included in the new version whose development is planned to commence early in 2002. Like *Career Directions* it contains an interest assessment tool that is used to help narrow the courses to be searched. Like the tool built into *Career Directions* it is ad hoc in nature, and

25. It is not produced or distributed in a paper version, but individual sections on particular careers can be printed by users when required. This reduces the need for multiple leaflets or other printed information to be produced in bulk and stored in FÁS offices, schools or other locations.

26. The cost of Internet access in Ireland is relatively high. On top of this, the ratio of computers, whether Internet connected or not, to students in Ireland is relatively low (see for example World Information Technology and Services Alliance (2000) *Digital Planet 2000: The Global Information Economy*, <http://www.witsa.org/dplanet>). Where computers are available students who need them for guidance purposes must compete for access to them with students needing to use them for formal school subjects. While government policies have provided each Guidance Counsellor with a computer, these are normally available in their offices, where large scale use by students is difficult. These factors pose particular problems for the electronic dissemination of career information. The first factor is one of the main reasons for CD-ROM being preferred as a distribution mechanism by many users. A 1998 survey of secondary schools by the National Centre for Guidance in Education showed very limited use of the Internet to access career information by Guidance Counsellors, very limited use of software packages specifically for guidance, and a strong need both for improved hardware and software resources for career guidance purposes as well as for training by Guidance Counsellors.

not based upon accepted theories of occupational choice or rigorous psychometric principles. Like the preference tool in *Career Directions* it is relatively untransparent, in that individuals' results are not reported to them, but this is intended to be rectified in the new version intended to be developed in 2002. QUALIFAX is not linked to job vacancy data or other FÁS data on labour market supply and demand.

29. In addition to *Career Directions* and QUALIFAX, *Careers World* is a widely used career information product that was developed by the private sector with financial support from the Department of Education and Science. Available on the Internet at <http://www.careersworld.com/> and distributed gratis to schools and other educational institutions in CD-ROM format, *Careers World* draws its information from enterprises, most of which are large and in the private sector, and enables them to provide information on the employment and careers that they offer. It is funded by employer subscriptions, and has been seen as a way for firms to help recruit staff in a tight labour market²⁷. Its coverage of small firms, which are the bulk of the Irish enterprises, is limited, as is its coverage of some occupational areas. Like *Career Directions* and QUALIFAX it incorporates a preference assessment exercise. It has a polished and professional feel to it with ample graphics and sound. The principal feature that is not contained in the other main products is its "real life" component: exemplars of individuals who are working in the contributing enterprises. It also provides links to tertiary and further education course information related to the occupational areas that it includes.

30. In addition to these three main products, there is a wide variety of other information available. Individual educational institutions, private firms, professional organisations and industry associations produce information, usually in print form, and distribute it to schools and other educational institutions. The national press produces careers guides. Many products developed and published by the private sector are available in print (for example a guide to adult education courses in the Dublin area is widely sold in bookshops and other locations). Some of the adult education guidance pilot programmes appear to be starting work to develop local data bases on education and training opportunities, with a particular emphasis upon adult education. And in some cases the LES appear to tailor information produced elsewhere to the needs of their clients: for example by simplifying the language and making it more visually attractive by the addition of simple graphics. It is commendable that clients' needs are being met in this way by local services, but it does hint at weaknesses in the initial central design of products to meet diverse client needs. Print-based sources such as all of these appear to be viewed favourably as very helpful sources of information, particularly by young people²⁸.

3.2.2 A new and more comprehensive electronic product

31. There are a number of gaps, and some duplications, in these services and products. Two approaches could be taken to achieve a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

- On the one hand the government could play the role of a market facilitator and standards setter: for example contracting out the production of career information products in order to stimulate a more diverse array of developers; laying down guidelines on quality standards; endorsing products that meet these standards; and providing funds to users to enable them to purchase the products of their choice. A decision to play this type of role more strongly would entail an assessment of the scope for, and risks involved in, the stimulation of a sustainable private market for career information products in Ireland.

27. Whether it will continue to enjoy the same level of employer support in a labour market less marked by skill shortages is a key question for its future.

28. National Centre for Guidance in Education (1997) *Careers Information materials in Irish Schools - Consumers View*, Dublin.

- Another option is for government to continue to act as the dominant producer of the major electronic career information products, but to do so in a more co-ordinated and comprehensive way, improving the quality of its products, and at the same time playing a stronger role in setting standards for the diverse range of other career information products available in Ireland²⁹.

32. While much of the career information available in Ireland is print-based, and this appears attractive to and valued by young people, arguments in favour of a progressive shift towards electronic delivery as the major vehicle are strong – despite present hardware and software limitations. Electronic products can be updated easily and cheaply; it is easier to link occupational and education and training data to one another electronically than in print; electronic delivery enables self-assessment tools to be readily linked to occupational and educational data; and electronic delivery potentially allows links to job vacancy data, data on student grants and other forms of income support to be incorporated into a single system. The need to shift QUALIFAX away from a DOS based arrangement in 2002 provides an opportunity for some of these issues to be addressed, and for work to begin on the development of a more comprehensive, co-ordinated and integrated electronic career information product.

33. Such a product should satisfy a number of criteria. It should:

Assessment

- Include a simple yet psychometrically rigorous self-assessment tool at its front-end which provides the user with a summary report along a number of personal dimensions that have a sound basis in career choice theories;
- Use the summary dimensions reported by the assessment tool as a way to link users to information about occupations and to information about education and training courses, and to link these to one another;

Education and training information

- Contain comprehensive information on education and training courses at all levels: upper secondary, FÁS training courses including apprenticeships; Post Leaving Certificate courses; third level courses at universities and Institutes of Technology; and adult education courses;
- Contain or provide links to information on available income support for education and training;

Occupational and labour market information

- Contain comprehensive descriptions of a wide range of occupations;
- For each of these occupations provide labour market supply and demand data such as labour force size, income levels, unemployment rates and the like;

29. Two of the main electronic products presently available in Ireland were initiated outside of government.

- Contain, where appropriate, graduate destination data such as employment rates and income levels ;
- Provide links to FÁS job vacancy data;

Quality

- Be based upon agreed standards (for example on currency and completeness) for the quality of the information provided for it by institutions;
- Be developed as a user-friendly product, with its readability and visual accessibility tested with potential users during the development phase;
- Allow all information to be easily printed in hard copy by users.

34. Given current technological limitations in schools in particular, such a product would need to be developed in the first instance in CD-ROM format, not only on the Internet. Developing such a product will not be a short term project. Nor can it be a task for only one organisation or agency. It will require a working partnership to be established between all concerned parties: the Department of Education and Science and FÁS in particular; but also education and training providers at all levels and professional associations.

3.2.3 A unified post-secondary admissions system

35. One other step, and a relatively simple one, can be taken to encourage a seamless view of learning opportunities in Ireland. At present those Leaving Certificate candidates who wish to enter further study must complete separate application forms for university and Institute of Technology courses on the one hand and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses on the other. The existence of two separate admissions systems, only one run by the Central Applications Office, is inconvenient, unnecessarily complex and cumbersome for students, and encourages the perception of an artificial dichotomy between the two types of post-school education. It complicates the provision by Guidance Counsellors of practical advice to students on admission requirements, and makes it more difficult for students to see the similarities and relationships between courses in the two sectors. For both reasons – the interests of prospective post-secondary students and the encouragement of a more seamless approach to post-secondary education -- it is strongly recommended that Ireland introduce a single applications and admissions system, requiring a single form to be completed, for both PLC and third level courses.

3.2.4 Setting standards for career information

36. The development of a comprehensive and integrated electronic product such as that described above should not be the only priority. The reality is that an enormous amount of the career information used in Ireland is in print form -- posters, leaflets, newspaper articles, magazines, books -- as well as on TV, on the radio or in video. Much of this is produced by educational institutions, but also by industry associations, professional groups, private enterprises, the media and the private publishing industry. Government has an interest in the quality of this information: its timeliness, its accuracy, its objectivity, its freedom from bias. Government therefore should play a role in helping to set standards for such products, and in helping improve their overall quality by endorsing those that meet these standards. Setting and promoting such standards will require a co-ordinated approach between the several agencies and

organisations involved, including the private sector, and in particular between the education and labour portfolios.

3.2.5 *Integrating networks and experience into career information strategies*

37. In all countries, including Ireland, evidence shows that young people obtain much of their career information from those that they know or are introduced to (family, friends, local employers, visiting speakers) or from experience (work experience, part-time jobs, industry visits). Yet often these information sources are not systematically incorporated into career development policies. In Ireland, and particularly within schools there is a lack of a widespread and systematic strategy to enable young people to contextualise career information through experience-based methods such as work experience and job shadowing, or the use of employers, alumni, parent and other community members and role models as part of schools' career guidance strategies. These are problems which need to be addressed as part of the adoption of a stronger developmental approach to career assistance in schools that was outlined in Section 3.1.1. Addressing them adequately will require co-ordination between the organisations and agencies that produce and develop career information, as well as between schools and community groups. And developing a wider and more systematic use of networks and experience as part of an overall approach to careers assistance will have implications for demands for increased resources to be devoted to Guidance Counsellors, hopefully reducing them in the longer term by extending the types of resources that schools can draw upon.

3.3 *A more integrated approach to the skills, qualifications and careers of practitioners*

38. The community of those who provide career information, guidance and counselling in Ireland is a wide one. They are located in many agencies: schools, universities, employment offices, government departments, community agencies, prisons and private enterprises are among them. Some provide services on a full-time basis, but most combine it with other jobs such as teaching or job placement. Some are regarded as professionals because of the level of the qualifications that they hold, but their professional work includes other forms of information, guidance and counselling in addition to career information, guidance and counselling. They work alongside many who are regarded as para-professionals: information officers, mediators and the like. And in addition there are many who provide this type of service informally as part of their main work roles: teachers of early school leavers; prison chaplains and warders and the like. Some of this very diverse group of people work mainly with youth. Some work mainly with adults. And some work with both. Some work largely with those members of society who suffer severe social and economic disadvantage. Some work mostly with those who do not but at times with those who do. All of this diverse group of people are trying to do similar things: help people with their career choices and career development. Their work is underpinned by a similar core of knowledge and skills. All can benefit from sharing their knowledge and experience with one another, and all need to work with similar tools and techniques. Like their clients they have career development needs. Some have to bear the costs of their initial training themselves. Others have these costs met by their employer. In some cases employing authorities provide them with a number of development and training opportunities, yet for many the opportunities for recurrent education and training are quite limited.

39. Whilst a wide community with many common interests and needs, it is a surprisingly fragmented one for such a small country. It is represented by several professional associations with different and often excluding membership requirements³⁰. It is served by several different training courses, designed to meet

30. Those working in the school sector and in adult education generally belong to the Irish Institute of Guidance Counsellors, which requires a post graduate diploma in guidance or its equivalent for membership, although not the teaching qualification that is required for employment. On the other hand

needs that are presumed to be separate but not focusing upon agreed common or core skills and competencies. These training courses lead to different qualifications that often bear little systematic relationship one to another, and which often deny the lifelong learning principles that so many who hold them strongly espouse³¹. Rarely for example can qualifications at a para-professional level be used as a building block towards higher level professional qualifications. And guidance qualifications often seem to be barriers to access to employment rather than a way of expanding career opportunities. This fragmentation in qualifications and training not only limits the career opportunities of those who work in the field. It also helps to limit the ability of the profession (employing authorities and employees equally) to focus upon common needs and concerns and to act collectively in both their mutual interests and to advance client interests. It helps to maintain distinctions that are increasingly artificial in a lifelong learning context between employment- and education- based career development.

40. The introduction of the adult guidance pilot programmes, and new government initiatives in the area of adult education, have thrown many of these issues into relief. The pilots are highlighting the need for the core skills of counsellors to be supplemented by the specialist knowledge and skills required for work with adults, a need which also exists in the case of those Guidance Counsellors with training largely designed for school settings who work in PLC institutions. The need for more flexible approaches to training, development and recruitment is highlighted by other developments. These include:

- The growing potential for ICT to extend access to career information, guidance and counselling;
- New approaches to career guidance that place an emphasis upon the involvement of community members such as parents, alumni and employers as advice and information resources;
- Increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers among the Irish population;
- New priorities in government policies for the disadvantaged; and
- A growing pressure for a European dimension to be included in education and employment policies.

41. At the moment training, qualification and career structures for career information, guidance and counselling workers in Ireland are having difficulty in coping with such developments.

42. As a first step in addressing these issues we recommend the development of a common standards framework for the skills, knowledge and competencies needed by those who work across the full spectrum of career information, guidance and counselling services in Ireland³². Such a standards framework, which should identify both core skills and the specialist skills required in different sectors, for workers at several levels, is needed as a basis for a more coherent approach to the construction of initial qualifications, as well

those who work in FÁS generally belong to the Irish Institute of Adult Guidance and Counselling, which requires a minimum one year certificate in guidance for membership.

31. However the directors of the major training courses have been meeting at regular intervals under the auspices of the National Centre for Guidance in Education in order to learn from one another and develop common approaches. This appears to have resulted in some successes in the development of training for Youthreach staff and community agents, as well as training in the management of guidance. A major gap in this process is the absence of FAS.

32. It is important however that it work in such a way that the construction of the competency framework is driven by the end users -- employers and the profession jointly -- rather than the training institutions.

as for the development of recurrent education and training programmes. It is an essential basis for the development of qualifications that can link to each other both horizontally and vertically in order to widen career opportunities for guidance workers and to increase the flexibility with which employing agencies can deploy labour.

3.4 A more co-ordinated approach to targets and resources

3.4.1 Policies to widen access by adults

43. If career information, advice and guidance are to be seamlessly integrated into national lifelong learning frameworks, careful thought needs to be given to how adults can access them. A key concern must be to ensure access to appropriate advice and information by those adults who do not fall within the client groups of the major institutional settings where career information, guidance and counselling is provided. In a lifelong learning context particular attention needs to be paid to those individuals who are in a process of transition: into and between employment and learning. In practice this means that those adults who are, for example, not job seekers and not students, but who wish to re-engage in learning or to develop their careers must not be allowed to fall through the cracks. At present those who are already employed and, in particular, those who are not in the labour force do not readily fall within the guidelines or client groups of the principal information, guidance and counselling services available in Ireland: schools; FÁS, the LES, tertiary education, PLC institutions, the adult guidance pilots³³. Given the low rates of labour force participation by women in Ireland improved information, advice and guidance for the group of women who are not in the labour force are important.

44. This is an issue that needs to be addressed as a priority. One option, given the advantages of a community-based rather than an institutionally-based solution to this problem, would be to take advantage of the strong community links of many of the adult guidance pilots and to change the guidelines for this programme so that both enrolled students and prospective students could be assisted. Another option would be for greater advantage to be taken of the provision in the 1987 Labour Services Act that allows FÁS to fund others – for example community groups – to provide career advice, guidance and information³⁴. Both options have much merit. Choosing whether one or the other, or what combination of the two, should be adopted requires a co-ordinated approach between the portfolios.

3.4.2 Funding adult access

45. The adult guidance pilot programmes are among the most interesting recent development in career information, guidance and counselling in Ireland. One of the impressive features of these pilots is that, unlike many other career services in Ireland they are clearly targeted: in this case towards those enrolled in specified courses. There have been suggestions³⁵ that adults outside of these designated courses might be charged a fee for services. Whatever the merits or otherwise of this suggestion, it runs the risk of creating distorted incentives for adults unless carefully co-ordinated between agencies and delivery

33. In principle the services of FÁS are available to everybody. However in practice, as in other OECD countries, the stigma attached to the association of public employment services with services for the unemployed deters many people from using them. In practice it appears that adult guidance pilots do in fact assist some who are not enrolled students, but this is not the intended group for their services.

34. Some use is already made of this provision. For example FÁS provides funds to the Irish Congress of Trade Union Centres to provide information services in local communities.

35. See for example Section 10.1 of the Irish national questionnaire.

settings. The adult guidance pilot programmes are not the only government services providing career assistance to adults in Ireland. Adults -- and in many cases adults whose characteristics appear similar to those serviced by the new pilot programmes -- also receive help from Guidance Counsellors in PLC institutions, from FÁS, from the LES, from the Prisons Service and from the Asylum Seekers Unit. In many cases it would be a matter of chance that determined which of these an adult, and in particular an adult who was not applying for or receiving welfare or unemployment benefits, approached for assistance. If one but not the others charged fees, without a common set of principles across agencies for deciding on who should be charged and at what rate, there is a risk of real inequities arising. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in a co-ordinated way between FÁS and the Department of Education and Science.

3.4.3 *Allocating guidance resources*

46. A further resource issue that affects services is the formula that is used to allocate guidance resources to PLC institutions. These are the same as those used to allocate resources to schools. However the student body in PLC institutions seems to consist of many adults and older adolescents who are disadvantaged, who suffer from personal or social difficulties, or who otherwise need more intensive assistance: for example overseas students who cannot call upon family networks for assistance. In addition the Guidance Counsellors are expected to undertake an institutional marketing role that is not expected of Guidance Counsellors in schools. This suggests a need for the basis upon which guidance resources are allocated to PLC institutions to be reconsidered.

47. Such a reconsideration should, however, be part of a wider consideration of how guidance resources are allocated to schools as well as to PLC institutions. At present the major basis is school size. This presumes that all schools have equal needs, but *ipso facto* this seems unlikely. The 2001 Guidance Enhancement Initiative took an important step towards recognising differential needs in the decision to allocate additional resources, at least in part, to schools with many disadvantaged students. However at best this is a rough and ready measure³⁶, and a clearer way of measuring need as a basis for allocating resources needs to be found.

48. However a more fundamental problem is that the formula used to allocate guidance resources to schools in fact does not allocate *guidance* resources. It allocates *teaching* resources, with the use of these hours, and their allocation between teaching duties and guidance, being at the discretion of the Principal. The 1998 Education Act requires schools to ensure that pupils have access to appropriate guidance to assist them with their educational and career choices. In Section 3.1.2 above we argued that there needs to be a clear statement by government, backed by resource decisions, that appropriate guidance includes access by all students to assistance with their career decision making and development. Strong pressure has been exerted to reduce student-to-Guidance Counsellor ratios as a way to increase guidance resources in schools. This is one approach to the resource decisions required if the government is to strengthen the implementation of the 1998 Act by giving students a right to assistance with their career decision making and development.

49. However an alternative approach, which will make fewer immediate demands upon the public purse, is to ensure that the resources allocated to schools for guidance are in fact used for this purpose, and to remove from Principals the discretion to allocate these resources for teaching purposes. This could be done as part of the government statement clarifying the meaning of "appropriate guidance" referred to in

36. Though less rough and ready than an allocation of guidance resources in order to increase the uptake of science subjects, another part of the Guidance Enhancement Initiative. This both seems to have little to do with the needs of students, and to be unlikely to bear a great deal of fruit given the strong concentration of Guidance Counsellors' work in upper secondary school.

Section 3.1.2. We are attracted to a way of addressing this issue that does not focus only upon student-Guidance Counsellor ratios in large part because it implies a much broader view of resource allocation and of careers assistance work, particularly if conducted in association with a stronger emphasis upon guidance programme planning. As we indicate elsewhere, we are attracted to models in which face-to-face assistance by Guidance Counsellors is only one element in a strategic approach to career development and decision making that also includes curriculum delivery, ICT-based assistance, experiential learning in work places and communities, and extensive use of community members such as parents, employers and alumni. If additional resources are to be allocated to career information, guidance and counselling in schools we believe that training programmes and resource development that can assist in the implementation of such a broader approach should receive a priority.

3.5 Improved steering, governance and co-ordination

3.5.1 *Steering and governance*

50. Recent years have seen progress in developing policy instruments for steering information, guidance and counselling services in Ireland. Both of the main services – in schools and in the labour portfolio – are now governed by legislative requirements, although the definition of the services required under the relevant legislation in each case remains fairly general. Within the education portfolio the National Centre for Guidance in Education conducts a number of valuable surveys and produces a number of useful reports that assist in highlighting key issues and pointing to directions for improvement. Within FÁS a similar function is performed by the Employment Services Support Unit, although publications on guidance issues are far fewer. In 1996 the National Centre for Guidance in Education issued schools with guidelines on guidance programme planning, and although guidance programme planning as yet occurs in less than one second-level school in three, with a committed Principal and committed guidance staff it can be a valuable internal instrument for setting goals and monitoring progress towards achieving them. Resources have recently been increased in the Department of Education and Science's guidance inspectorate. The 2001 Guidance Enhancement Initiative was an important step in moving towards a tailoring of guidance resources to policy priorities. While standards for service delivery, staff competences or career information are not used at the moment in Ireland, individual FÁS Employment Services Offices have ISO9000 accreditation and FÁS has recently introduced a course on management of guidance for senior managers. Services in tertiary education generally seek accreditation from AGCAS in the UK.

51. Despite this progress, there are additional steps that could be taken to improve the link between policy and practice. We have suggested the development of standards for career information in Section 3.2 above. We have also suggested in Section 3.3 above that a comprehensive standards framework for the competencies required of all career guidance workers be developed. Such a standards framework could be a basis for a much stronger role to be played by employing authorities in influencing the content of training for guidance staff, particularly within education where, at the moment, the role played by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in accrediting programmes appears quite weak, with little leverage over institutions being exerted in practice. In light of the requirement of the 1998 Education Act for schools to provide students with appropriate guidance to assist them *in their educational and career choices*, there is a need for a strong emphasis upon *career* guidance within training programmes. The National Centre for Guidance in Education has regular discussions with training providers on a harmonisation of content. The management of this process more centrally by the government as the principal employer, bearing in mind the role of the Department of Education and Science in funding universities, would help to advance this process. This will need a joint collaborative approach to be adopted by the Department of Education and Science and FÁS.

52. Another weakness in linking policy making and practice is the absence of much basic administrative data that allows service use to be monitored. A precedent has recently been set in this area, with the new adult guidance pilots developing a simple client recording instrument to allow the use of services by designated target groups to be monitored, and in addition the FÁS/LES Caseload management System is used to monitor and track clients' progress. Such experience has shown that it is possible to develop such an instrument in a way that preserves client confidentiality and that involves professional staff in a positive way in its use in order to improve service quality. There is a need to develop a similar instrument for use in all schools and Post Leaving Certificate institutions. The regular collection of data in these institutions on access to services as a function of age, gender, grade, geographical region and presenting problem is an essential tool for policy making. It would also be a valuable tool for individual Guidance Counsellors, giving them systematic rather than impressionistic, as at present, feedback on the services that they provide. Feedback to individual institutions should be an essential feature in the development of such an instrument.

53. The more comprehensive overall approach to the provision of careers assistance within schools that we have advocated in Section 3.2 will also require an improved and more co-ordinated way to monitor the overall resources – both through personal guidance and through curriculum delivery – that are devoted to careers assistance.

3.5.2 Co-ordination

54. The national seminar that was held during the national visit showed the value of bringing all key players in career guidance together to address key issues of common concern. To help ensure a co-ordinated approach to issues such as these, we advocate the creation of an Irish career guidance forum on a permanent basis in which all key players – employing bodies; professional associations, trainers as examples – are able to participate.

55. In addition to the creation of a forum such as this, there is a strong need for more systematic co-ordination between the major actors. At a number of points above we have suggested that many of the practical issues that need to be resolved in developing career information, guidance and counselling services in Ireland within a lifelong learning framework will require improved co-ordination between the key agencies and stakeholders involved. These include:

- Improved co-ordination between curriculum-based and guidance-based approaches to careers assistance within secondary schools, and a wider adoption of approaches that strengthen Guidance Counsellors' work through the use of experience, ICT and community resources;
- The development of a new and more comprehensive electronic career information product;
- The development and promotion of a set of standards for the full range of career information products available in Ireland;
- The development of a comprehensive standards framework for the skills, knowledge and competencies needed by the full spectrum of those who provide career information, guidance and counselling services, to be used as a basis for the content of initial and recurrent training programmes, to create better horizontal and vertical links between qualifications, and to improve career paths for guidance workers ;

- The need for decisions on whether improved adult access to guidance services would better be served by modifying the guidelines of the adult guidance pilots, by making greater use of provisions in the Labour Services Act, or by some combination of these;
- The development of a common set of principles to fund adult access to career guidance, in order to avoid the creation of distorted incentives between services.

56. While many agencies and organisations are involved in providing career information and guidance services in Ireland, the Department of Education and Science and FÁS are the two key agencies. Improved co-ordination and co-operation between them, in particular on the issues set out above, will be essential.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

57. In moving closer to a lifelong approach to the provision of career information, guidance and counselling services, Ireland has many strengths. The legislative basis is solid, there is a climate that favours initiative and experimentation, the profession is a committed one, and the services that it provides appear on the whole to be well received. As the major services normally are provided by those who also have other tasks and roles – personal counselling, job placement as examples – there needs to be an emphasis upon ways in which the careers aspect of their work can be strengthened. We have made a number of suggestions, which are summarised in Appendix 3. Central to them is the development of an improved information base to help steer the development of services, improved co-ordination between the key stakeholders, and a more diverse approach to delivery that makes wider use of community resources, ICT, experience, and curriculum delivery. We have also suggested ways in which resources might better be targeted to improve adults' access to services and to sharpen the use of guidance resources in schools.

APPENDIX 1: OECD REVIEW TEAM

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Europe and Central Asia
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APPENDIX 2: PROGRAMME FOR THE NATIONAL VISIT

Monday 3 December

- 10.30-12.30 Meeting with the drafting committee for the national questionnaire
 - > Discussion of the programme for the week
 - > Discussion of the national seminar to be held on the Tuesday
- 12.30-13.30 Lunch
- 14.00-16.30 Discussion with senior officers of the Department of Education and Science
- 16.30-17.00 Discussion with National Centre for Guidance in Education

Tuesday 4 December

National seminar

- 10.30-11.00 Introduction to the OECD review and expected outcomes
- 11.00-12.00 Co-ordination and governance
- 12.00-13.00 Guidance practitioners: skills, qualifications and careers
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-14.45 Career information: development and delivery
- 14.45-15.30 Evaluating guidance: quality assurance
- 15.30-16.15 Lifelong guidance for all: next steps

Wednesday 5 December

- 9.45-10.45 Irish Training and Employment Authority (FÁS): overview
- 10.45-11.45 Career information services: FÁS and other
- 11.45-12.45 Lunch
- 13.15-14.15 Southside Local Employment Service
- 14.45-15.30 FÁS Training Centre Loughlinstown
- 16.00-17.00 Discussion with senior officers of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Thursday 6 December

- 9.00-10.30 Loreto College, Crumlin
- 11.00-11.45 Terenure College
- 12.45-13.45 Lunch
- 14.30-16.00 Dunlaoire Adult Educational Guidance Service
- 17.00-18.00 Dr Michael O'Rourke, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin

Friday 7 December

- 9.30-10.30 Liberties Vocational School, Dublin
- 11.00-12.30 Careers and Appointments Office, Trinity College Dublin
- 13.00-14.00 National visit review meeting

APPENDIX 3: A SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Suggestion/recommendation</u>	<u>See Section(s)</u>
• Develop more systematic tools for assessing student need in order to obtain a better balance of services between the junior and senior cycles of secondary school, between different schools, and between schools and Post Leaving Certificate institutions	3.1.1, 3.4.3
• Adopt a stronger developmental or curriculum-based approach to career assistance in schools by: – Including career education as a compulsory element in the curriculum of the Transition Year; – Incorporating the LCVP career-related modules in a wider range of Leaving Certificate programmes; – Making the LCVP more attractive by relaxing its guidelines to give students greater flexibility in subject choice	3.1.1
• Issue a clear and public statement (by government) that “appropriate guidance”, as specified in the 1998 Education Act, includes access by all students to assistance with their career decision making	3.1.2
• In considering the resource implications of such a statement, adopt a broader approach to the types of assistance that this would require than a simple focus upon student-to-Guidance Counsellor ratios	3.1.2
• Develop a new and more comprehensive electronic career information product	3.2.2
• Develop a unified post-secondary admissions system	3.2.3
• Develop standards for all forms of career information	3.2.4
• In association with the adoption of a stronger developmental approach to career assistance in schools, more clearly integrate the use of networks and experience into career information strategies	3.2.5
• Develop a common framework for the skills, knowledge and competencies required by all career guidance workers: at all levels and across all sectors	3.3
• Address the present gap in access to services by employed adults, and more particularly by adults not in the labour force, by: – Modifying the guidelines of the adult education guidance pilots; or – Making greater use of provisions of the 1987 Labour Services Act that allow service delivery to be contracted out to community groups; or – Both of these.	3.4.1

- Address the potential distorted incentives that could arise from charging adults for access to one type of service but not others 3.4.2
- Ensure, through a public statement by government, that guidance resources allocated to schools are used for guidance purposes 3.4.3
- Locate discussions with training providers on the harmonization of curriculum content more centrally within government 3.5.1
- Develop a client recording instrument for use by Guidance Counsellors in schools and Post leaving Certificate institutions 3.5.1
- Create an Irish career guidance forum on a permanent basis, and strengthen joint and co-operative work between the Department of Education and Science and FÁS on a number of specific issues. 3.5.2



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